

INCLUSION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE SLOVENIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Policy brief



migratED

MEDIA EDUCATION
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Inclusive education and the #MigratED project

The project #MigratED (Migrations and human rights enhanced through Technology in Education) aims to promote good practices of Global Citizenship Education on intercultural dialogue, migration, human rights, and sustainable development issues, and to raise young people's awareness of human rights and migration through digital tools, thus contributing to inclusive education for children and young people with a migrant background. The project consortium which brings together nine partner organizations from Italy (WeWorld - GVC as the lead partner and the Municipality of Bologna and CSAPSA2 as partner organizations), Portugal (4Change and COFAC/CICANT), Greece (ActionAid Hellas and Karpos), Cyprus (Future World Center) and Slovenia (SLOGA Platform).

Among the project activities, an international training was organized in Bologna in January 2019, and in November 2019, SLOGA Platform organized in Ljubljana trainings for educators and educational experts on migration, human rights, sustainable development and the use of digital tools. In 2020, activities took place with groups of young people (a series of workshops on media literacy, migration and human rights, storytelling and video production), who produced short videos on migration. In January 2021, SLOGA Platform, in cooperation with the Slovenian Philanthropy and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, co-organized the online Forum on Learning and Education for an Inclusive Multicultural Society.

In 2020, the Lifelong Learning Platform awarded the project #MigratED as the best practice in the category of 'Learning that empowers – The future of learning'.

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Immigration to Slovenia

According to the Ministry of the Interior¹, in February 2021, 175,594 third-country nationals (Bosnia and Herzegovina: 92,632; Kosovo: 28,968; Northern Macedonia: 15,966; and Serbia: 21,118) and 28,590 citizens of the European Economic Area had been holding a permanent or temporary residence permits.

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia², there were 2,095,861 residents in Slovenia in 2020, of which 1,939,510 were citizens of the Republic of Slovenia (947,014 men and 992,496 women) and 156,351 foreign citizens; the latter accounted for 7.5 percent of Slovenia's population. Among foreign nationals, most were citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina (73,179; 52,900 men and 20,279 women), followed by citizens of Kosovo (19,577; 12,197 men and 7,380 women), Serbia (16,243; 12,163 men and 4,080 women) and Northern Macedonia (13,324; 7,424 men and 5,900 women).

Data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia³ for 2020 show that young people under the age of 29 represent 34% of immigrants (53,202; 32,113 men and 21,089 women). Most

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1 Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve: Priseljevanje v Slovenijo; <https://www.gov.si/podrocja/drzava-in-druzba/priseljevanje-v-slovenijo/>.

2 Statistični urad Republike Slovenije: Prebivalstvo po državi državljanstva, petletnih starostnih skupinah in spolu, Slovenija, letno; <https://pxweb.stat.si/SiStatData/pxweb/sl/Data/-/05E1008S.px/>.

3 Statistični urad Republike Slovenije: Prebivalstvo po državi državljanstva, petletnih starostnih skupinah in spolu, Slovenija, letno; <https://pxweb.stat.si/SiStatData/pxweb/sl/Data/-/05E1008S.px/>.



of them are citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina (25,711), Kosovo (9,991), Northern Macedonia (5,757) and Serbia (3,532). Data disaggregated by age groups show that in 2020 there were 7,131 children under the age of 4 living in Slovenia (3,688 boys and 3,443 girls); 6,715 children aged 5 to 9 (3,540 boys and 3,175 girls); 5,746 children aged 10 to 14 years (2,956 boys and 2,790 girls); 5,725 adolescents aged 15 to 19 (3,144 males and 2,581 females); 12,847 young people aged 20 to 25 (8,750 males and 4,097 females); and 15,038 young people aged 25 to 29 (10,035 males and 5,003 females).

Forced migration represent a relatively small share of immigration to Slovenia. In 2020, 3,548 asylum claims were lodged in Slovenia. Since 1995, Slovenia has recognized international protection to 992 persons⁴.

Slovenia: legislative and policy framework

The Foreigners Act⁵ regulates the conditions and ways of entry, departure and residence of foreigners in the Republic of Slovenia (Article 1), while the international protection is regulated by the International Protection Act⁶. In 2019, the Government adopted the Migration Strategy,⁷ which based on inter-sectoral collaboration and addresses migration in a multifaceted, comprehensive and long-term manner and places greater emphasis on understanding all aspects of migration and improving measures to manage them. The Strategy encompasses of six horizontal pillars linked to specific aspects of migration, i.e. the international dimension of migration; economic migration as part of legal migration; international protection; integration into the society; irregular migration and return; and security component. In 2017, a new Government body, Government Office for Support and Integration of Migrants⁸ has been established, but only asylum-seekers and international protection beneficiaries fall within their responsibilities.

According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) 2019⁹, Slovenia ranks on 31st place among 52 analysed countries. The index establishes that Slovenian integration policies provide equality on paper but not necessary in practice providing opportunities for immigrants to fully integrate into society. Focusing on education, MIPEX assesses the policies as slightly unfavourable. *"All migrant pupils have the basic right and support to access compulsory school in Slovenia. Migrant families and schools continue to receive little support to further promote social integration of migrant pupils, which remains a weakness in Slovenia."*

Focusing on asylum-seekers and international protection beneficiaries, the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism for Slovenia (2016)¹⁰ assesses that persons with recognized international protection are entitled to the same rights to all levels of education (preschool, elementary, secondary, higher, university and adult education) as Slovenian nationals. Nevertheless, the burden of proving the level of education obtained in the country of origin lies on the asylum seeker, which is extremely challenging. *"There are no special vocational trainings or employment related education programs for refugees, therefore they need to meet the same conditions as everyone else, which is often extremely difficult."*

The PISA 2018 survey¹¹ provides international data on the global competencies of 15-year-olds, who, together with their peers from 66 countries, assessed their own global competence. Compared to students from OECD countries, Slovenian teenagers on average report lower perceived self-efficacy in explaining global issues, poorer interest in learning about other cultures, less positive attitudes towards immigrants, poorer intercultural communication skills and poorer response to various global issues. Slovenian 15-year-olds also reported less frequent involvement in activities related to Global Citizenship Education in school. A survey by the ISA Institute

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4 Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve: Priseljevanje v Slovenijo; <https://www.gov.si/podrocja/drzava-in-druzba/priseljevanje-v-slovenijo/>.

5 Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nr. 1/18, 9/18 and 62/19.

6 Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nr. 16/17.

7 <https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/vladna-strategija-na-podrocju-migracij/>.

8 Vlada Republike Slovenije: O Uradu vlade za oskrbo in integracijo migrantov; <https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/vladne-sluzbe/urad-vlade-za-oskrbo-in-integracijo-migrantov/o-uradu-vlade-za-oskrbo-in-integracijo-migrantov/>.

9 <https://www.mipex.eu/slovenia>.

10 Peace Institute (2018): National Integration Evaluation Mechanism for Slovenia (2016); <https://www.mirovni-institut.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/NIEM-National-Report-Slovenia-2016-ENG.pdf>.

11 PISA survey on adolescents' global competence; <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2018-global-competence.htm>.

(2015)¹² showed that teachers eager to integrate various cultures into schools, but have expressed the need for more didactic materials to work with immigrant students.

To ensure that voices of children from Slovenia are included in the process of drafting the key document of the European Union on children's rights, the EU Strategy on Children's Rights, UNICEF Slovenia, Legal-Informational Centre for NGOs and SLOGA Platform implemented **two focus groups and one in-depth conversation with young people** in October 2020. Identifying widely present stereotypes and prejudices, sometimes stemming from the lack of knowledge or information, the children living in an institution strongly believe that identifying and countering stereotypes and prejudices should be addressed in school. Furthermore, participating children and adolescents would want to learn more about different cultures and religions, tolerance, non-violence, mental health issues, human rights (including LGBTI rights), different care arrangements (e.g. life in residential institutions for children or in foster families); climate change, sustainable development. Furthermore, they recognize the lack of subjects that would empower children and adolescents for independent life, such as active citizenship, financial literacy, digital skills etc.

Human rights are essential to achieve sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹³ with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has been adopted in September 2015 in New York by all United Nations (UN) Member States as a set of global, universal goals to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The 2030 Agenda is anchored in human rights, including the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, and the Declaration on the Right to Development (para. 10). The SDGs strive towards realizing the human rights of all (preamble), and emphasize "the responsibilities of all States /.../ to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status" (para 19).

While according to CONCORD Europe,¹⁴ migrants and diaspora are often not fully recognised as actors and subjects of sustainable human development, the 2030 Agenda recognizes for the first time the contribution of migration to sustainable development. Migration is a cross-cutting issue, relevant to all of the SDGs. 11 out of 17 goals contain targets and indicators that are relevant to migration or mobility, including the Agenda's core principle to "leave no one behind" (including migrants). The SDGs' central reference to migration is made in target 10.7 to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies, which appears under Goal 10 to reduce inequality within and among countries.¹⁵

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Inclusion of migrant children in the education system

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia¹⁶, in the 2019/2020 school year, 5,253 children who are foreign citizens attended the preschool education (boys: 2,773, girls: 2,480). Most (4,636) were from Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2,654; Kosovo: 683; Northern Macedonia: 517). In the 2019/2020 school year, 11,860 foreign nationals attended the primary school programs, the vast majority (11,337) of whom came from Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina: 5,497; Kosovo: 2,230; Northern Macedonia: 1,263). Data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia do not provide insight into the number of foreign students studying in Slovenia in secondary school programs. The Statistical Office also publishes data on adult primary education, but not data disaggregated by citizenship. At the tertiary level, 6,448 foreign citizens were enrolled in educational programs in the 2019/2020 academic year (of which 3,687 were men and 2,760 were women). Almost 60% were citizens of the countries of the former Yugoslavia (3,868), and 1,670 were citizens of EU Member States.

12 ISA Institut (2015): Razvijamo medkulturnost kot novo obliko sobivanja; http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/kadri/tif/Raziskovalno_poroc_iilo.pdf.

13 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

14 CONCORD Europe: Deconstructing 10 myths about migration and development – publication; <https://concord-europe.org/blog/2016/03/09/publication-myths-migration-development/>.

15 Migration Data Portal; <https://migrationdataportal.org/sdgs#0>.

16 Statistični urad Republike Slovenije: Izobraževanje; <https://pxweb.stat.si/sistat/sl/Podrocja/Index/192/izobrazevanje>.

2019/2020 school year

- **PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION**
5.253 children who are foreign nationals
- **PRIMARY SCHOOL**
11.860 foreign nationals
- **TERTIARY EDUCATION**
6.448 foreign nationals



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- The **systemic regulation of the education of immigrant children is based on the Guidelines for the Integration of Children of Immigrants in Kindergartens and Schools (2012)**¹⁷, which mandate educational institutions to implement the principle of “an inclusive approach to implementation of rights of immigrant children to education in order to effectively integrate them and create an intercultural society”, whereby additional professional assistance for teaching the Slovene language is provided only for schooling children.
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport provides schools, which enroll immigrant pupils, with **hours of additional professional assistance in learning the Slovene language** in the first and second year of schooling. In addition to providing resources for teaching Slovenian language, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport enables and supports implementation of classes of mother tongues and cultures for immigrant pupils. From 2008, the Rules on Assessment of Knowledge and Advancement of Students in Primary Schools include a provision that allows the possibility of adjusting the knowledge assessment for immigrant pupils. Immigrant pupils from other countries whose mother tongue is not Slovene and are first to be enrolled in primary school in Slovenia in grades 6 or 9, can perform the national knowledge assessment test in the same year only on a voluntary basis¹⁸.
- **The Rules on Norms and Standards for the Implementation of Educational Programmes in Secondary Education (2010)**¹⁹ stipulate the obligation of a secondary school to organize a Slovenian language course for students who, due to lack of knowledge of the Slovene language, need and wish for assistance, taking into account the expert assessments of the teacher on the level of their knowledge and understanding of the Slovenian language. Schools organize a course for students only for the first two years of their education in Slovenia²⁰.

Given the particular dimension of inclusion of **asylum-seeking and refugee children** into education, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport recommends a **two-step inclusion model**. Prior to enrolment of a pupil into regular classes, a 20-hours preparatory phase is organized for the children. Thereafter, children are included in regular classes, whereby they are entitled to additional professional assistance in learning the Slovene language; a continuous form of implementation is recommended. After completing the introductory phase, the pupil is included in a follow-up program, where he is provided with additional support in the period of two school years, as the program includes activities offered both by school and in the local environment (learning Slovene as the second language, learning assistance, individual programs for pupils, adapting methods and forms of work in teaching and adjusting the assessment during the school year, supporting involvement in interest activities at school and in the local environment, various holiday opportunities and activities in the local environment, advanced language courses and support in organizing complementary classes of mother tongues and the culture of immigrant children)²¹.

In 2016, an **addendum to the Literacy program in Slovene for adult speakers of other languages with an annex for underage international protection applicants, aged 15-18**, was developed and adopted. The program supports more adequate inclusion in primary school program for adults. Literacy in Slovene for adult speakers of other languages is an educational program designed to literate people whose first language is not Slovene. The program has an addendum with specific contents and instructions for implementation for underage asylum-seekers, aged 15 to 18 years. The purpose of adapting this program to underage asylum-seekers is their empowerment to integrate into adult education, thereby increasing the possibilities for their integration into Slovene society. By enhancing their literacy skills, it shall be easier for them to integrate into different areas of society²².

- 17 http://eportal.mss.edus.si/msswww/programi2013/programi/media/pdf/smernice/cistopis_Smernice_vkljucevanje_otrok_priseljencev.pdf.
- 18 EMN Focused Study (2017): (Member) States' Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination, national contribution for Slovenia; <http://emm.si/wp-content/uploads/Kon%C4%8Dna-SI-NKT-EMN-MBS-2017.pdf>.
- 19 <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV10249>.
- 20 Dr. Stanka Lunder Verlič (2016): Vključevanje priseljencev v slovenski vzgojno-izobraževalni sistem; http://www.sloga-platform.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SLOGA_casopis_24st_SPLET.pdf.
- 21 Dr. Stanka Lunder Verlič (2016): Vključevanje priseljencev v slovenski vzgojno-izobraževalni sistem; http://www.sloga-platform.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SLOGA_casopis_24st_SPLET.pdf.
- 22 EMN Focused Study (2017): (Member) States' Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination, national contribution for Slovenia; <http://emm.si/wp-content/uploads/Kon%C4%8Dna-SI-NKT-EMN-MBS-2017.pdf>.

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Livada Primary School

Livada Primary School (Ljubljana) has a specific character in Slovenia due to the diversity of its pupils: more than 90 % of pupils are of other ethnic or ethnic affiliation. Excerpt of an **interview with the principal Mr. Goran Popović** (Slogopis Nr. 24, October 2016):²³

"We have been building the model of including immigrants in regular education and strengthening the knowledge of the Slovene language throughout the years. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport provides schools enrolling migrant children with hours /of Slovene language classes/, but /.../ significantly too little, and learning in a large group is significantly less successful than individual work. Our solution was so-called preparatory phase – immigrant children starting the classes with a Slovene language lesson. The preparatory class is not part of the compulsory lessons, but the response of students and parents is very positive, as children learn the Slovenian language free of charge and at the same time, as a pre-lesson, the Slovene language class does not interfere with regular lessons.

- *In the preparatory class, pupils are part of an age-heterogeneous group, but this is not disturbing, as the emphasis is on learning the Slovene language, and they all share the same (lack of) knowledge and (il)literacy. This model allows them to be partially involved in regular classes and in contact with peers, which is an advantage in terms of socialization.*
- *Our two-level model of integration of immigrant children differs from European two-level models, which usually represent a parallel educational line, whereas we include pupils in the regular program, which could be defined as a gradual two-level model that merges into a one-level model. Our working methods are also recognized at European level as of exceptional quality.*
- *Despite many difficulties in managing inter-ethnic conflicts at school in the past, these have faded with many of our efforts. We place great emphasis on getting to know different cultures and strengthening respect for diversity, which reduces intolerance."*

As part of the #MigratED project, the pupils of the Livada Primary School (Ljubljana), in cooperation with the SLOGA Platform, prepared a **short film on multiculturalism and migration at their school**. The short film presents the stories of students and a teacher of the Livada Primary School, a multicultural school known for enrolling children from immigrant families. The pupils and the teacher think about their arrival to Slovenia, the reasons for leaving their homeland, the first impressions of Slovenia and the school, and their plans to stay in Slovenia or return to their homeland.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QG4loVtf220>

Stories of Children from Around the World (Časoris Institute)

The online news portal for children Časoris, as part of the project "Stories of Children from Around the World", presents **children from other countries who immigrated to Slovenia to escape the war or follow their dreams of a decent life and a good education**.

<https://casoris.si/category/sola-se-predstavi/zgodbe-otrok-sveta/>

"Through the refugee's eyes" (Humanitas Association)

The Humanitas Association has developed an **interactive experiential theatrical play** "Through the refugee's eyes". By participating in a theatre performance, participants get the opportunity to relive feelings, hardships, violations of the rights of people on the move. **People with a migrant and refugee background** are also involved in the preparation and performance of the play.

<https://www.humanitas.si/>

Challenges of intercultural coexistence (ISA Institute)

The ISA Institute implements the project "Challenges of Intercultural Coexistence", which aims to contribute to the development of **intercultural values** and to **improve the professional skills of managers and professionals in education** for more successful integration of immigrant children from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the Slovenian educational system.

<https://isainstitut.si/isa/izzivi-medkulturnega-sobivanja/>



23 https://www.sloga-platform.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SLOGA_casopis_24st_SPLET.pdf.

"Escape and Flight" (Forum for Equitable Development)

The purpose of the project "Escape and Flight" of the Forum for Equitable Development was to bring young people closer to a topic that most people do not want to face and which has received an extremely negative connotation in Europe in recent years: the arrival of refugees in Europe. In cooperation with experts in the field of gamification (MindMaze), they prepared a trip around Ljubljana – an outdoor version of the so-called escape room. In 2017, the Global Education Network Europe recognized the project as one of the most innovative Global Education projects.

<https://forumfer.org/projekti/pretekli-projekti/>

InterCap (GLOBAL Institute)

Within the European project InterCap, in which the GLOBAL Institute participated as a partner and which addressed the issues of migration and sustainable development in connection with the issue of security, a training package with three pedagogical methods was prepared.

<https://developtogether.eu/sl/>

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- The state must ensure equality of starting positions in education – appropriate material conditions and other circumstances relevant for an individual. Above all, greater emphasis is needed on strengthening the competencies of teachers to work with children with a migrant and refugee background.
- Support to overcome language barriers should be strengthened; opportunities for learning the Slovene language, as well as the scope of ensured hours of learning the Slovene language should be enhanced.
- Asylum-seeking children are not entitled to a subsidized kindergarten under the current regulation, although, for instance, some collaborative and inclusive municipalities enable some children a subsidized kindergarten fee. Many asylum seekers are aware of the importance of pre-school education for the child's wellbeing, his development and especially for integration into Slovenian society (especially in the light of lengthy asylum procedures), but as asylum seekers, they are not entitled to reduced kindergarten fees, while the material situation does not allow many families to pay the full kindergarten fee. With the aim of ensuring equal access to pre-school education, regardless of the status of the child, Slovenia shall also provide subsidized pre-school education to asylum-seeking children.

Suggestions for further readings

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>.

CONCORD Europe: Deconstructing 10 myths about migration and development – publication; <https://concordeurope.org/blog/2016/03/09/publication-myths-migration-development/>.

Lunder Verlič, Stanka, Dr. (2016): *Vključevanje priseljencev v slovenski vzgojno-izobraževalni sistem*; http://www.sloga-platform.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SLOGA_casopis_24st_SPLET.pdf

Migration Data Portal; <https://migrationdataportal.org/sdgs#0>.

Ministry of Internal Affairs: *Priseljevanje v Slovenijo*; <https://www.gov.si/podrocja/drzava-in-druzba/priseljevanje-v-slovenijo/>.

MIPEX (2020): Slovenia; <https://www.mipex.eu/slovenia>.

NGO Report on Sustainable Development Goals 'Sustainable Development That Leaves No One Behind' (2020); http://www.sloga-platform.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/POROC%CC%8CILO-NVO-ENG_NET.pdf.

Peace Institute (2018): *National Integration Evaluation Mechanism for Slovenia* (2016); <https://www.mirovni-institut.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/NIEM-National-Report-Slovenia-2016-ENG.pdf>.

PISA survey on adolescents' global competence; <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2018-global-competence.htm>.

SLOGA Platform: *Teden globalnega učenja*; <http://tuditi.si/leden-globalnega-ucenja/>.

Tudi ti (Global Education platform); <https://tuditi.si/>.



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